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^THE REUTER TRANSCRIPT REPORT@  
REMARKS BY ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO  
AT THE AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION LAW AND NATIONAL SECURITY  
BREAKFAST

SUBJECT:  
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY  
AND LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

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ATTY GEN. RENO: Thank you very much. I need to get a  
transcript of your comments describing the job because it renews  
my idea that this is an awesome responsibility.

I come to Washington with a great regard for the  
department, with a profound love of law, and with a great love  
of lawyers -- or at least most lawyers. (Laughter.) As I have  
said on a number of occasions, I cannot abide greedy, uncivil  
and bigoted lawyers. It is a special responsibility that I have  
to do right under the terms that you describe, Mr. Sinnifield  
(sp), and I'd like to describe for you for a moment how I am  
trying to approach the job.

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2.

The first issue that I apply to everything that we do and that I have instructed the department to apply is what is the right thing to do. It's easy to do the right thing; trying to decide what's right is

very difficult. I want to do it in a non-partisan, thoughtful way, talking to Republicans and Democrats, talking, whenever appropriate, to the private sector and the public sector, talking to the various agencies of government that impact on the issue, and trying, irregardless of political considerations, to come up with the right decision under the law and under the evidence and under the constitutional framework in which we operate.

I want to listen to people, and I think that this committee can be terribly helpful to the Department of Justice in making sure that we hear from all concerned what the law should be, what our decisions should be. I have discovered that a lot of people want to be heard on a great variety of issues in Washington, and we have got to develop procedures so that people can be heard properly, so that their thoughts can be considered, but that decisions can be ultimately made on many of the issues that the Department of Justice confronts. Otherwise, though I may be President Clinton's only attorney general, I still may be deciding what to do about intelligence issues or contacts with represented parties at the end of whatever service I have as attorney general. So I look forward to working with the committee, with all lawyers and with all agencies of government in trying to reach conclusions based on informed discussion but based on discussion that has an end and that can produce results.

Secondly, I come from 1,000 miles away, from a city that started as a little bitty town, had 1,500 people in 1896 when its first newspaper was published on May 15th, and its first editorial said we now have 1,500 people, we should incorporate. It had grown a bit by the time I was born there in 1938, but obviously, within my adult life it has become a great international city, and even as a state court prosecutor, I saw so many of the problems overlap between intelligence, between various government agencies, between the military and law enforcement, between the State Department and Middle Eastern sheiks and things like that.

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It is an extraordinary opportunity to see the competing interests of so many different federal agencies.

I want to do everything I can to make sure that we work together. I cannot abide turf problems amongst federal law enforcement agencies. I cannot abide turf problems, will not tolerate them amongst the Department of Justice's law enforcement agencies. There is too much to do in America in terms of crime, our national security, and all the issues that we hold dear for us to be fighting, duplicating our resources, fragmenting our efforts and refusing to share information.

But it has been interesting to me to see beyond the issue just of law enforcement how critically important it is for the intelligence community to come together with law enforcement, not as a team, but in appropriate, thoughtful discussion that defines the role that each of these communities plays, does it right, understands each other's roles, and talks whenever appropriate under our principal division of responsibility. The same be true of the military and the State Department and the justice agency of the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

One of the most difficult problems that I have had in the eight months that I have been attorney general is talking to somebody in the Department of Justice who is an expert on a particular area. And I will say, "Well, have you talked to Elizabeth about this?" "Well, no." Well, have you called Delpart (sp) at State?" "Well, no." "Well, would you call him and see what he says and then get back?" "Well, they have a different view." "Well, have you talked to this person?" Then I find a whole new agency that I don't know anything about -- (laughter) -- or find a new department at State that I don't know anything about. I'm even finding sections in the Department of Justice that I don't know anything about. (Laughter.) And trying to get everybody together so that we can come up with a principled and informed decision that combines what law should be, what the facts are, what public policy or foreign policy should be is difficult. But I am dedicated to trying to do everything I can, and I would ask your assistance. If you represent an agency that I don't know anything about that I should know something about, tell me before I reach the crisis and have to make a decision within 30 minutes so that I'm reaching out to you in a hurried way. I really want to establish a dialogue and understand the role of all involved, the policy issues, so that we can apply the law in a principled and informed way.

There is, on the east side of the building of the Department of Justice, a statement that I constantly refer back to: The common law issues is derived from the will of mankind, issuing from the people, framed by mutual confidence and sanctioned by the light of reason.

I've applied that to everything the Department tries to do in terms of understanding our role. If the law issues from the people, the people have got to understand what we're doing. If the law is framed by mutual confidence, we've got to talk together and work together and develop that mutual confidence in order to apply reason.

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Clearly one of the first issues that I face, faced at 7:09 this morning on the Today Show, is violence: violence in all its forms in the United States. So many people have said that street violence or local violence is not an issue of the federal government, but it is clear to me from my travels across this country that patterns of violence and organizations conveying violence (speak ?) from district to district and state to state, and federal law enforcement can be an invaluable partner to local law enforcement not in terms of headline grabbing, not in terms of credit taking, but in terms of developing a true partnership with local law enforcement that provides appropriate intelligence information, shares it the right way, takes the appropriate cases to federal court that belong in federal court, works with local law enforcement to provide evidence necessary for the prosecution in local court, and makes sure that the prison resources of this nation are used to house the truly dangerous -- the major traffickers, the career criminals -- for the length of time the judges are sentencing them and that the department works with communities throughout this nation to develop alternative sanctions that operate on a carrot-and-stick approach that gives people an opportunity for punishment or treatment and an opportunity to come back to the community in a sensible way.

Much has been made over the attorney general talking about prenatal care and prevention and the like, but it is critically important for this nation to understand that we will never be able to build enough prisons for all the children of America who are at risk today unless we start focusing on them. It is imperative that as we talk about punishment both for that 13-year-old who puts a gun up beside somebody's head and the career criminal. But we also understand that this nation has for too long now sorely neglected and forgotten its children. And if we started putting a little bit of focus into prevention in terms of health care, programs for afternoons and in the evenings, school-to-work programs, and opportunity for service, we can do more to prevent crime than all the prisons in America. That's what I see as my role in terms of addressing the issue of violence in this country.

The second issue that will be much upon our minds -- and obviously, it's been much upon my mind in these last eight months -- is the issue of immigration and illegal immigration.

My father was born in Denmark and came to this country speaking not a word of English. People teased him about his funny clothes and his funny language, and he never forgot it. And he was kind to everybody for the rest of his life, even as a reporter for the Miami Herald for 43

years. This nation is a nation of immigrants, and we cannot forget that tradition.

But I come from a community that has been overwhelmed by immigration in these last 15 years: its public hospitals, its schools, my court calendars, the prisons. And I know the burdens that immigration places on specific communities around this nation. It is imperative that the Department of Justice make sure that the law against illegal immigration is enforced in a correct way, according to principles of due process and fair play, without divisive tensions, without inflaming rhetoric, and that we do it the right way: to continue to prize the tradition of immigration while at the same time ensuring an appropriate allocation of the burdens placed by immigration on the limited resources of the state and federal government.

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It is also important to make sure that the Immigration and Naturalization Service is upgraded in terms of management to become a real partner with the intelligence community, with the diplomatic community, with the law enforcement community in addressing the critical issues that we have faced.

I spoke out long and loud on NAFTA, never thinking that I would be an expert on international trade, and I'm still not. But I became convinced that the long-range solution to illegal immigration in the Southwestern United States lay with a strong economy in Mexico. And I began to realize how important it is to understand the interrelationship of so many of the efforts of government in this country, and I'm dedicated to trying to do it. I've got an awful lot to learn about immigration, an awful lot to learn about intelligence, an awful lot to learn about so many different things, and I would take you up on your offer to work with you, Mr. Shenfield (ph), in every way possible on these issues and the issues that I will address now, because I think it is imperative that we open this process, when it is appropriate, to full considered dialogue.

I will never forget those February days as I prepared for confirmation. There were the typical issues that I might expect: what were you going to do about minimum mandatories, how were you going to handle your personal opposition to the death penalty, what about career criminals, how were you going to handle the Bureau of Prison issues. They were all expected. I understood what was going to happen. But then people told me -- they shook their head at me and looked at me almost pityingly and they said, "You just don't know what you're in for yet. There is a whole realm of issues that you haven't even begun to consider and you can't consider until you get sworn in, and then you will be briefed." (Laughter.)

Now, eight months later, I understand full well and I'm still learning what they were talking about in terms of the magnitude of the problems that face the Department of Justice in formulating a policy on dealing with issues of intelligence and national security. It is this area which constitutes our third great challenge and about which I'd like to talk with you today.

The challenge is to identify and manage our role in matters relating to intelligence and national security. No area is more intricate, and I know that full well now, and fraught with peril than the interaction between intelligence and law enforcement. We haven't been as well prepared as we should be to deal with these issues of

national security and intelligence when they arise in the context of our investigations or prosecutions. Those of you who follow the -- (inaudible) -- the shortcomings in BNL, BCCI and the Noriega cases understand to what I refer.

Let me begin by setting forth two realities. First, while the Soviet Union may be dead, espionage directed at our vital interests continues to thrive. I know it full well from what I do every day.

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Espionage in the traditional sense is not the only threat. International narcotics trafficking, economic espionage, terrorism and transnational money laundering have reached such size and sophistication as to pose a critical threat to our national interest. The need for a strong intelligence-gathering capability to inform policymakers fully in these areas has never been more imperative than it is today. And I think as I look out at it in terms of nations fragmented, with modern technology giving us greater opportunities for espionage, that it becomes all the more critical. As languages surface, I'm just amazed at the links in language across the world, the multiplicity of languages, the complications that are involved in trying to understand different dialects. The problem is as acute today as ever before.

As for law enforcement, I pledge that we will vigorously pursue and prosecute those who engage in espionage and related conduct to the full extent of the law. We've been doing that and we're trying to do that right now.

And this brings me to our second reality. Law enforcement is now operating on an international level. I began to see it in my role as state attorney in Miami. There were inevitable international issues, as I mentioned. Crime does not stop or start at our borders anymore. Criminal enterprises assume international proportions. The proceeds of the smuggling of aliens or narcotics from one country to another are laundered through a business in a third country. We realized years ago that if we were going to combat these problems effectively, we would often need to work with law enforcement and other officials in foreign countries. In recognition of this changing role, Congress has wisely given us expanded extraterritorial jurisdiction. And so the law enforcement and intelligence communities find themselves occupying the same field and targeting the same players and transactions in order to accomplish our separate missions.

I do not wish to suggest that law enforcement should merge its efforts with those of the intelligence community. There are important, critical public policy reasons why our two communities must remain separate. Law enforcement and intelligence exist for different reasons and operate in accordance with different laws and rules. But we need to, we are

and we are going to continue in every way proper and possible to communicate with each other consistent with these rules to ensure that we do not work at cross-purposes and that we protect the rights guaranteed under our Constitution. If we revert to working in isolation and ignoring each other's game plan, we risk

collision, and yet if we cavalierly embark on a, quote, "team effort," we can run afoul of the rules. It's a great balancing act but one I feel full confident that we can maintain in the spirit of what is in the best interest of national security, what is in the best interest of justice, and what is in the best interest of the Constitution.

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I can only speak for law enforcement when I say that we need to redefine our relationships and responsibilities in this area consistent with our changing role. I'd like in particular to talk about three such relationships: Justice's relationship with the White House when issues of national security arise, our relationship with the intelligence community where law enforcement finds itself requiring a coordinated effort, and mostly, most important, Justice's relationship to the public we serve.

I include in this last category the subject which I think may interest you, too, which is our relationship to civil litigants. Let me first turn to our relationship with policymakers in the executive office of the president. We recognize that there are certain types of information required in the course of our investigations that are of great importance to our national security. Such information can and should be shared with the NSC so it can advise the president on matters relating to national security. For example, we should share (credible ?) information of illicit activities on the part of foreign officials of a plot which might result in the destabilization of a foreign power, or of any number things on which we would agree the president or his advisers must be aware.

I do not need to point out that sharing investigative information should not come naturally to the Department of Justice. We strive to maintain the integrity of our law enforcement effort by remaining apart from politics and possible political pressure. Even the appearance of political pressure and political influence on an investigative or prosecutorial decision can hurt the public's trust in our commitment to execute the laws faithfully and impartially.

I want to do everything I can, as I have said, to make sure that the Department of Justice is not politicized in any fashion. It is difficult in a democracy because politics is what democracy is all about -- politics in the good and fine sense.

But Justice should be political party blind, it should be color blind, it should be ethnic blind, it should be impartial in decisionmaking according to the evidence, the law and the constitution of this country. For this reason, we enacted the policy requiring that all contact on all cases from individuals at the White House originate with the Office of Counsel to the President, and be directed at the outset to the attorney general, the deputy, or the associate. In this way, we insulate our agents and attorneys from any improper attempt to influence them or even from a misguided attempt at communication which may be perceived by the agent or the attorney as an improper attempt to influence.

At the same time, I am instructing all the agency employees that address the issue to do their job, do it the right way based on what's right, and tell anybody who attempts to exert political pressure to pound alt. (Laughter.) Having gone to great lengths to protect our law enforcement processes from influence that is not related to law enforcement ends, we are not accustomed to sharing information with executive officials outside the law enforcement community.

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We, therefore, need a regularized and publicly-defined mechanism for the dissemination of those types of information of significant import to national security. Currently, the Department of Justice and the NSC are working on a proposal that will enumerate what information should be passed, to whom it should be given, and how it should be transmitted. This will ensure that the president has the information he needs to make informed national security decisions.

Now let me to turn to the second relationship I mentioned, the relationship of the Department of Justice to the intelligence community. No subject is more difficult than the question of how law enforcement can and should work with the intelligence community. We have information the community wants but may not be legally entitled to receive. We have a need for information which the community can gather, but it may not be permissible for us to ask intelligence agencies to do so. When and to what extent can we share our stores of information or our capacity to gather it? How much can we ask the intelligence community to do for us? These are some of the critical issues that we face.

A joint task force, composed of members of both communities, is currently looking at these questions and will make certain recommendations to Director Woolsey and me. I look forward to receiving their report. But as part of that process, I look forward to whatever appropriate input and discussion can be identified with it to make sure that all points of view are considered. We have identified, and I'd like to share, however, as part of this process, some points with you.

First, I believe the Department of Justice can and should make greater use of some intelligence information for its strategic planning. We are not now adequately using the information the intelligence community gathers to set our sights on the problems ahead. With intelligence about emerging trends in international narcotics trafficking and growing terrorist ties in certain countries, we can shape our investigative priorities, redirect our prosecutorial resources and be prepared to combat new criminal threats.

We can pull so much information together to shed light on (crime ?) problems happening in the United States. In this way, we can take the limited resources of law enforcement and use them in the wisest manner possible. But I want to stress that it is important that this information be shared only when proper, and it is imperative that we develop an understanding of what's proper and what's not proper.

Secondly, we must confront the question of how we request assistance from the intelligence community in a manner that is consistent with the community's mission and with sound public policy. Many agree that the sharing of strategic information is permissible, assuming this is appropriate. How far can we legally go and properly go in asking the intelligence community to help us on a particular case? If we agree that we can ask the community to search for files for existing information, when can we ask intelligence agencies to gather new information for us? Is it enough that the target is legitimately of intelligence interest? Do we need to be certain that we're not asking the intelligence community to reshape its priorities to accommodate ours? All of these questions are formulations of the old question: Where do we draw the line?

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We need appropriate definition. I don't have all the answers yet, but we are trying to evolve sound policies that will benefit the intelligence community, the department and the public.

The third point on which we agree is that our technical systems for receiving and maintaining intelligence from the intelligence community are embarrassingly inadequate. I am amazed as I find in the Department of Justice a manilla folder data storage, an electronic data storage and in index card data storage. I wonder how we will ever meet all our discovery demands at some times. The intelligence community can hardly be criticized for its reluctance to share certain information when we in law enforcement cannot be certain that we know what we have and how to retrieve it. We are far behind the times in automated data storage and retrieval, and we need very much to catch up. And in the process of catching up, we will face a whole host of security issues concerning how we can effectively protect the information and yet still have ready access. I think it's a lot more difficult to infiltrate an index card data storage system than one computerized system.

Ladies and gentlemen, I don't think that most Americans realize the dimension of the security problem once information is stored in a computer. When you look at what one hacker can do, and you think of a sophisticated mind that wants to break this open, our challenges in this area are mind-boggling. And I think it is imperative that this government and the private sector, both in terms of private enterprise and national security, do far more than we have done to date. But we can face these challenges if the intelligence community and the Department of Justice work together as proper to address the problem.

Finally, even where we have assured ourselves that interaction with the intelligence community is appropriate and we have the technical capability to interact, we don't always know how to do it. This brings me to a fourth point of consensus. Where we have agreed that interaction is appropriate on a given matter, we need to provide a means by which individual prosecutors can interact effectively with the intelligence community when the need for cooperation arises on a particular case, and not six months or a year or three years into it, but right up front as soon as the need for cooperation is known.

A common problem that I've already noted is that we don't speak the same language. Now that's not the intelligence community's fault. I thought I had trouble speaking legalese. Coming to Washington and speaking Department of Justice and Washington legalese is even more

difficult. Nobody can speak the same language as lawyers. A file or record search basically means the same thing in law enforcement parlance; however, in the intelligence world, there are many levels of searches. Elizabeth (sp) uses words that I still don't understand. I decided I was going to publish a vocabulary after I left office of non-classified definitions that could be important for others coming into office.

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However, in the intelligence world there are many levels of searches. A prosecutor who legitimately needs to request a search of intelligence community files may, out of unfamiliarity with the operation of the intelligence community, do so in a way that is overly burdensome or improperly broad. We, therefore, need to train selected individuals in both communities to act as focal points for receiving, processing and making such requests. These individuals should be familiar with the resources of the intelligence community and the proper scope of request for assistance from the law enforcement community.

However, requests for information do not only originate with those of us in the law enforcement and intelligence. Private litigants and other members of the public often ask us to provide them with information. How we respond reflects how we view our relationship with the public. I'd like to talk with you briefly about that and my background.

I come from a state that has probably one of the most open public records laws possible, that says everything except intelligence information relating to either an ongoing or prospective investigation, and certain other matters, are public records. In Florida, for example, the disciplining of prosecutors is a public record after the fact. We have a government in the sunshine law.

I, frankly, thought that when my name first was mentioned in February for attorney general that I would never, ever be considered because nobody would ever want to vet 15 years as prosecutor in Dade County Florida. There would be too many problems and too many minefields in that 15 years for anybody to want to examine. In a three or four day vetting process, I was scrutinized. I don't think there's a thing that the vetters missed. And my cases were scrutinized. And I was amazed to look back, and I think back to that time and watch how my office responded. As questions arose, there was a memorandum. As another question arose, there was a case filing. In another question there was a close-out document explaining why we had done something, why we had not charged, what our sentence recommendations were and how we had handled a particular matter. We were able to do this because we had participated in open government and we had explained ourselves to the people in an appropriate way.

Many reporters from Miami will tell you that my favorite comment was "no comment" concerning pending investigations and pending prosecutions. But after those investigations and prosecutions were

concluded, if there was not intelligence information concerning ongoing investigations contained therein, we commented and we described why we did things.

I am a deep and devout believer in open government where it does not threaten the judicial process, the investigative process or national security. With this belief, I came to Washington. My first official undertaking was to understand the whole security and classification process. Then I studied FOIA and, lastly, the Privacy Act, and I get more confused.  
(Laughter.)

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I all along believed that if only the American people could see what the lawyers in the Department of Justice have done; and if only Department of Justice lawyers could explain why they've done something or why they haven't done something; and if only we could explain what we had done to follow up on a complaint; and only if we used small, old words that the public could understand, then the public would have such great, great confidence and admiration for the lawyers in the Department of Justice who serve the people of this country day in and day out in such a dedicated way.

So the big question is how do we protect national security, how do we protect proper intelligence information, how should we maintain the integrity of the judicial process so we do not try our cases in the paper and do not leak information concerning investigations while at the same time giving the people of the United States the opportunity to understand and watch and appreciate their government in action.

Well, law enforcement is all about bringing criminals to public trial. Public accountability and openness should be one of the highest priorities of government. No government is legitimate if it is not accountable. No government is accountable where it does not share with the people the information they need to make informed judgments. The Freedom of Information Act provides the public with a powerful tool whereby it can enforce the disclosure of information held by the government. I say it's a powerful tool because each and every denial of a request for information must be made for a specific reason, a detailed and unfortunately slow process.

In very many cases, the reason for the denial of a FOIA request is that the information is classified. Last year alone, the Department of Justice and, for the most part, the FBI created over -- I (balk ?) at this every time -- 818,000 classified documents. I just couldn't believe that. Vast categories of this information remain classified after decades and decades, some of it for good reason, but much of it I fear for no good reason at all.

Mary Laughton (sp), who many of you knew and who gave me such wonderful guidance and with such wonderful strength, a person I will miss a great deal, confronted the protective instinct of government information managers when she worked closely with the FBI in the early days of FOIA. Frustrated with the propensity of the bureau to deny access in those days, she filed her own FOIA request for a copy of the FBI directory. It was denied. (Laughter.) The bureau has come a long way since then, and would no longer issue a blanket denial, but we can still do better.

I share the president's concern that too much information is kept from the public. This is especially true with respect to classified information in the post-Cold War period. We must respond to the legitimate desires for a more open system; yet at the same time we must also continually, vigilantly protect sources and methods. Without such protection, our effectiveness and intelligence capabilities will quickly be undermined. I believe we can do both.

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On October the 4th, I announced that all agencies must apply the principles of openness in government to each and every request for information filed under the act.

In its capacity as the litigator of all FOIA issues, the Department has promulgated a new and more open policy. In a memo to agency heads, I describe the policy this way: "It shall be the policy of the department to defend the assertion of a FOIA exemption only in those cases where the agency reasonably believes that disclosure would be harmful to an interest protected by that exemption. Where an item of information might technically or arguably fall within an exemption, it out not to be withheld from a FOIA requester unless it need be."

Today, the department is part of an interagency process that is reviewing ways in which classified information could be more readily declassified after a certain length of time. The reasons for withholding release, despite the passage of time, must be both narrow and specific. We must protect truly sensitive national security information, but we must dispose of the large amounts of classified information, much of it old with little or no real remaining sensitivity, that is of great interest to the public. We expect that any system which includes public accountability and access will require greater use of personnel and resources to review request for access by the public. I believe that the increased openness is worth this commitment of resources.

In addition, we must ensure that when our citizens go to court, either as defendants, private parties or respondents to an administrative hearing, that they have, as far as we can provide, consistent with national interest, access to the information they need to litigate their case. This has been an ongoing issue. On occasion, a case cannot be litigated because the government cannot, consistent with national security, provide litigants with classified information they need to argue their point. The Classified Information Procedures Act has worked well in the criminal context. We should now consider whether a similar mechanism is appropriate in civil and administrative proceedings. Even short of enacting such procedures we should, at a minimum, ensure that the government's treatment of private litigants in matters of access to classified information is always evenhanded, always forthright, always fair.

All these steps I have outlined require a great deal of effort. They're going to require thoughtful discussion, careful analysis, principled application of the law. I look forward to working with you in the days ahead. (Applause.)

I said I would be happy to answer questions.

Q Ma'am, Attorney General, what's your reaction to the current level of staffing at the Department of Justice as Congress increasingly makes more federal crimes? And while I saw today I guess the crime law that's going to be voted on is going to provide more police officers, there doesn't seem to be any mention of more attorneys. And I was just wondering what your reaction is. (Laughter.)

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ATTY GEN. RENO: One of things that I did about four years ago -- Florida is a sales -- its revenue is based on sales tax, and when the recession hit Florida, suddenly there was a great adjustment in our budget since we didn't have a rainy day fund, and all state agencies were directed by the governor to cut their budgets by 10 percent with eight months remaining in the fiscal year.

I don't think we were nearly as well funded as the Department of Justice because about six months before that -- those cuts, the United States attorney for the southern district of Florida had hired six attorneys away from me at an average salary increase of \$20,000 a year. We cut that budget 10 percent with the remaining -- and within the remaining eight months without laying anybody off and only having to have one furlough day. It made me absolutely convinced that government can do more with less when its back is up against the wall. I want to try to do everything I can to eliminate duplication, to ensure appropriate allocation of resources between main Justice and the U.S. attorneys, between the various components of main Justice, to make sure that we're using our dollars the right way. And then as I identify needs, I want to do everything I can to make sure that those needs are addressed.

Q As a former State Department attorney, I'm a little concerned with issues that you are now grappling with -- proper role of foreign policy --

ATTY GEN. RENO: Let me just say something. It's 9:00 and I talked too long. So anybody that has to leave, feel -- please feel free to leave, but I would like to try to answer just a few questions.

Q My question is about the proper balance of foreign policy and law enforcement -- (inaudible due to background noise) -- example. One -- some people think that we ended up going to war with Panama because a prosecutor made a sole decision to indict him -- (inaudible due to background noise) -- the question is what kind of decisionmaking process is appropriate for a case that -- (inaudible due to background noise) -- implications for national security in terms of sectionalization of the Justice Department, in terms of coordination -- (inaudible due to background noise)?

ATTY GEN. RENO: One thing I've learned is not to talk about cases that you don't know anything about, and thank goodness I don't have to wade into Noriega like I have to do with some of the other cases after the fact.

But let me just use some ongoing efforts. I recently, at the invitation of the Mexican government and at the urging of

the State Department, visited Mexico, spent some considerable time with the attorney general, met with the foreign minister, had lunch with the president of Mexico, and developed a far better understanding of some of the law enforcement issues that Attorney General Carpizo, whom I

respect a great deal, faces. I learned a lot of the history that has gone into the relationship.

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I have become convinced that the more we can talk issues out appropriately with the State Department, consider the implications, make sure that the law and the evidence are applied appropriately, but that foreign policy issues are considered as well, not with regards to politics but what is in -- with regard to the best interests of the United States, that that is the appropriate way to do it. And I'm trying my level best to figure out all the little sections at the State Department that I have to touch bases with to make sure that I have not omitted an interest or a thought along the way.

Q You mentioned the BNL matter. Can you tell us to what extent the Justice Department is going to continue to investigate the actions of the past administration regarding BNL?

ATTY GEN. RENO: Well, one of the things that I can tell you -- to give some credence. The vice president was on, I think, Meet the Press one Sunday morning and was asked by the panel, "Well, now you've closed the BNL investigation." And the vice president said, "I don't know anything about that." And I was very touched. It gave me a great regard for the Washington media. I was on the same program some three weeks later, and they said, "Before we begin, we want to publicly acknowledge that we were wrong, that the transcript upon which we relied -- that the Department of Justice sent us a transcript of the court proceedings and that we are proceeding to investigate any allegation that relates to the matter in a professional, thoughtful, orderly way."

Q (Off mike.)

ATTY GEN. RENO: You really want to give me a bully pulpit! (Laughter.)

I think that what has happened in America, with the Depression, the feeling around America was "Washington can solve the problem." With World War II, that became more confirmed. With the civil rights movement, greater confidence was placed in Washington and its ability to secure justice. After that, people began to think, well, we'll solve the problem by throwing money at it. And great gobs of federal money would be thrown a thousand miles away, sometimes with a lot of strings

attached so that it was difficult to use it the right way, sometimes without any regards to the needs and resources of the community.

Then the money began to dry up and programs were sent to the state capitals but without dollars. The state capitals turned around

and sent it to communities without dollars. In these last three or four years, the communities of America have had their backs up against the wall, and I think suddenly, without dollars, without being able to pass the buck, the American people are showing their creative, innovative, bold spirit again.

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In my travels across this country in the last eight months, I'm seeing the same thing that I was beginning to see in neighborhoods, where people are coming together -- police, schools, social workers coming together as a team, the public and private sector. There are just some exciting opportunities underway now. But one of the problems that we have all had occasion to see is that America too often waits for the crisis to happen.

It would rather build prisons than make an investment in children up front. It would rather do remedial programs in a community college than make an investment in the elementary school.

We have got to change our whole thrust from waiting for the crisis to happen to putting dollars into prevention in ways that make the American family far more self-sufficient. We have laws that say to a lady who is on welfare with three children, "Look, if you go get a job making a minimum wage, you're going to lose benefits and be worse off than if you hadn't gone to work in the first place." We've got to change that. But we've got to understand that an investment just in one part of a person's life won't pay off. It makes no sense to do a great job with Head Start if we fail to invest earlier to make our Head Start efforts more effective, and then if we fail to invest after the child leaves Head Start in afternoon programs and evening programs.

That's -- you ask how we can pay for it -- every person I've talked to says that one of the best investments in a person's future, both for an ability to learn, ability to pursue a constructive life is prenatal care for the parent. Every dollar spent for prenatal care will save us three dollars at public hospitals around this nation for the treatment of low birth rate problems caused by lack of prenatal care.

Immunizations -- I've seen pre-sentence investigations of a youngster who is in trouble going back to when he had a high fever and he didn't get treated and he has had problems ever since. He had the high fever because he had measles. We are in the richest or one of the richest nations of the world, and we are still not current in our immunization by age of our children. That is a travesty.

We spend lots of dollars and have program that says to a person 70 years of age that you can have an operation that extends your life expectancy by three years, but we don't give preventative medical care to the children of the working poor who make too much money to be eligible for Medicaid or who don't have health care benefits. We've got to provide educare for those children whose parents work or who are neglectful or indifferent to those children, not to the extent of having been (declared dependent ?). We can do so much if we look at that whole continuum, focus around the family, make sure that parents are old enough, wise enough and financially able enough to take care of their children. But most of all, we have got to -- when I talk to students who have been in trouble, kids in detention, ex-gang members,

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I ask them what could have been done to prevent the problem. Again and again, two answers shine forth: something to do afternoons and in the evenings that was relevant and useful, and somebody to listen to me, who didn't hassle me, didn't put me down, treated me with respect, told me when I was wrong, but did it in a way that made me feel like I wasn't two inches high.

I've adopted an elementary school in Washington, Raymond (?) Elementary. I mentored a youngster back home beginning in junior high, and she has now just entered Howard University. I challenge every lawyer in Washington, just think what would happen if your law firm adopted a block, working ministers, teachers, principals, police officers in that neighborhood. Or if you didn't want to adopt a block, adopt a grade, adopt an elementary school, or tutor one kid. If every American becomes involved and provides a listening post and a support for a youngster at risk, we can get this problem solved quick. (Applause.)

Q Madam Attorney General, this is not a FOIA request, but it does involve a case affecting national security, law and immigration service. It was written up in the Washington Post several weeks ago involving a man named Nikoli -- (name inaudible). The book is written by Russell Loren Howe (?) called, Speaking With the FBI. (Inaudible) -- to ask whether this case has come to your attention, and if so, whether you have any plans to look into it.

ATTY GEN. RENO: It has not come to my attention. You have certainly piqued my curiosity.

Q I'll give you a copy of the book. (Laughter.)

Q Attorney General, my query is pretty trivial, but in a career in the Navy I -- (inaudible) -- being a steamboat driver and Naval intelligence and it gave me a biding interest in the history of intelligence. As a consequence, I was intrigued by the case of that unsavory gentleman who was kicked out of the secretary-generalship of the United Nations Kurt Waldheim. And I read the literature, and it seemed to turn heavily on the fact that he had been an intelligence officer on the staff of a general who was hanged for war crimes. And what was very heavily emphasized was the fact that he was a first lieutenant. And having been in low ranks on military staffs, I know that a first lieutenant doesn't cut much ice, he doesn't make any decisions, he doesn't help people make decisions; he's sort of a gopher going for information.

As a consequence, I called OSI. I thought maybe I could find out a little bit more about the micro environment of the

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German intelligence in the case of Kurt Waldheim. I was told the information was not available and would never be made available. In view of the criticism of OSI recently, I wonder if Kurt Waldheim's information can be revealed?

ATTY GEN. RENO: Let me address that issue when I return to the Department of Justice today. And if you'll give me a call, I'll try to follow up on it.

To give you an example of some of my frustrations, I have a Thursday morning press availability. I was talking about openness in government and one of the people who regularly attends said, "Look, I'm trying to do what I think is a good story on the Department of Justice about your process for disseminating dollars for -- \$150 million for community policing based on the appropriations passed last summer, and I wanted to review some of these applications and look at your process, and your people say I can't look at the applications." Well, that just -- I couldn't believe it. And I turned to Carl Stern and he says, "I've got to brief you on it." There are apparently regulations that say grant applications can't be reviewed for 30 days. I'm working through all these regulations. I don't know the answers, but that will be one that I will address when I return.

Q Thank you.

Q Ms. Reno, it's been three decades since President Kennedy was killed, and yet a great portion of our country, people who are just private citizens, still have wonders about the information that's contained in files. And I was wondering how you would respond to the requests that have been made to fully open those files and to explain what happened.

ATTY GEN. RENO: I have not reviewed that yet. I have asked that I be given briefings. And I don't have answers for you yet as to what can and can't be. Again, we're working through all of these. Just the whole dimension of the request is mind-boggling. But most of all, it's just trying to work through these rules and regulations and dispense with rules and regulations in an appropriate way where they don't seem to have any compelling public interest.

Thank you very much. Wait -- wait -- (applause).

Q There was an article in the Post today about somebody asking the retail stores in the high-risk areas to start closing early, like 6:00 or 7:00 in the evening, in an effort to prevent some violence. So I wondered about your opinion on this subject. Also, could a curfew help to keep the children off the streets

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and perhaps keep them from getting killed and murdered?

ATTY GEN. RENO: One of the things I always hated as a local prosecutor in Dade County was when some big shot from the Department of Justice came to town and told us in Miami how to do things and when to do things and what to do. So let me not do that to Chief Thomas in Washington. (Laughter, applause.)

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